

Arts & Entertainment



One of the winners in the Virtu Three residential furniture design competition is udderly simple. That's the table entitled "Sacred Nevi Cow Table," not the person, who refused to be identified.

Clive Oshty

Virtu III exhibition displays the unusual in furniture

by Boris Zvonkovic

Currently on display in the Fine Arts Building Gallery is "Virtu Three," a touring exhibition of the winning entries in the third annual Residential Furniture Design Competition in Canada. "This exhibition is about an exploration of contemporary design of furniture in a variety of media... you will see a lot of new ideas; some are outrageous, some impractical, some totally clever, some very useful," explains Bruce Bentz, curator of this exhibit and industrial design professor at the U of A.

The exhibit includes sixteen innovative pieces of "furniture" that attempt to be both functional and artistic, with some succeeding, but most being more of one and less of the other. However, all of the pieces on display are certainly unique, one of a kind items that challenge our common Brick Warehouse idea of furniture. Shannon Crossman's distinctive "Sacred Nevi Cow Table," for example, would qualify for the outrageous yet practical category. Made of veneered particle board and fibreglassed styrofoam, the table has four cow legs, udder details, and is painted to resemble a cow, perfect for a fun-type breakfast table. Sherry Pribik's "Untitled"

table would qualify for the totally clever yet impractical category. What this de-

into about a hundred pieces and then reassembled the table by binding the pieces with colored thread. The result is a uniquely precious table; though structurally unsound, it is aesthetically pleasing.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of all the exhibits is the unusual combination of materials used in each item. As Bentz explains, "designers have always been interested in the dynamics of structure... and try to do things that appear to be physically impossible, or at best difficult." Michael Brun's "Met 19" coffee table, for example, is a combination of glass lacquer, chromed metal and leather, and shows what appears to be a geometric solid piercing a plate of glass.

Though some of these exhibits have commercial production potential, their real value, according to Bentz, rests in the new ideas they may spark in the minds of other designers.

The "Virtu Three" furniture exhibit will remain in the Fine Arts Gallery until January 29, and is well worth a look for those whose tastes run toward the innovative and contemporary.

Elgar highlights ESO show

Edmonton Symphony Orchestra
with Gabor Janota, bassoon
Jubilee Auditorium
Saturday, January 20

review by Mike Spindloe

The ESO's Cadillac series, the Magnificent Masters, resumed last weekend after an extended holiday break. Of course, the orchestra hadn't been idle, playing a Lighter Classics concert the week before and with the Richard Eaton Singers in a presentation of Handel's *Messiah* before Christmas, among other events.

Last weekend's program was an unusual one for a Masters series concert. The featured soloist was Hungarian bassoonist Gabor Janota, who performed not one but two works with the ESO.

The program began, however, with Mozart's "Prague" symphony, a three-movement symphony (deleting the dance section) that nonetheless is one of the composer's most popular symphonic works. The title comes from the name of the city where it was first performed, but has no programmatic connotations.

In the first movement, the orchestra threw themselves into the Allegro with vigour after a slightly hesitant opening Adagio. This confidence carried through to the middle movement, a relaxed Andan-

te, but the Finale, a sprightly Presto, lacked somewhat in energy and dynamic contrast. This lack of contrast was even more apparent in retrospect when the symphony let loose with a true *fortissimo* in Elgar's *Enigma Variations*.

Soloist Gabor Janota was up next with the first of his two pieces, Maros' Concertino for Bassoon. Janota demonstrated impressive technical mastery of his instrument, running through patches of sixteenth notes with precision and clear articulation. However, the performance also pointed up the limitations of the bassoon as a solo instrument in general and the Jubilee Auditorium in particular: the sound of Janota's instrument did not fill the hall. At times during this piece the orchestra, which is featured to as much effect as the soloist, came perilously close to drowning Janota out during his non-cadenza passages.

After the interval came the second piece featuring Janota, Weber's Concerto for Bassoon. This work is rich in melodic material and once again featured many technical scale passages for the soloist. A much better balance between orchestra and soloist was apparent here, although the limited dynamic range of the bassoon detracted from the overall effect.

The program concluded with the aforementioned *Enigma Variations* by Sir Edward Elgar. The work, a set of 14 variations inspired by friends of Elgar, is

her first great orchestra piece, and, as performed by the ESO, it was definitely the highlight of the evening.

Here the full dynamic potential of the orchestra was finally explored, with the

brass sounding like twice their numbers and the strings playing with real passion. The ninth variation, "Nimrod," was squeezed for every last drop of sentiment, while the boisterous Finale made a rousing conclusion to the concert.

Stern, Berg enthrall Suite crowd

Bob Berg/Mike Stern Quartet
Yardbird Suite
Wednesday, January 18

review by Darren Salyn

The Yardbird Suite hosted the Bob Berg/Mike Stern Band last Wednesday night, in front of a standing room only crowd. The quartet played two shows back to back to kick off what should be a very successful tour for the group.

The two band leaders became on-stage supermen as they took turns soloing, each drawing enthusiastic applause from the highly appreciative audience. Although they were performing the second of two consecutive shows, there was no lack of energy from the group as they displayed their mastery of their instruments.

There was also another dynamic duo which made up the very full-sounding and solid rhythm section. Jeff Andrews on electric bass and the stunning drum machine Dennis Chambers brought out the best of Stern and Berg's intense

rock/jazz hybrid as well as taking some well-crafted solos themselves. Combining the styles of bop, funk, and rock, the group mesmerized an audience that smiled and shook their heads in amazement, then broke into deservedly wild cheers after each solo.

It is really no accident that Berg and Stern sounded like they were meant to be playing together considering their backgrounds. Both players were influenced by rock music, particularly that of Jimi Hendrix, as well as a wide range of jazz. They also both played with Miles Davis after Davis returned to the music scene from semi-retirement in the early eighties. Thus it seems only natural that Berg and Stern have merged their compatible styles on their own.

No matter who in the line-up one may have wanted to hear in particular, there was no choice but to sit back, absorb and enjoy. Nothing but the best was delivered by the Bob Berg/Mike Stern Band and only one thing could be better than seeing their performance: to see it again.



Tenor saxophonist Bob Berg teamed up with guitarist Mike Stern to deliver an intense if somewhat short show at the Yardbird Suite last Wednesday.

Mike Spindloe